

*The Proper Interpretations of the Scriptures
Clear'd and Vindicated:*

IN A
SERMON

Preach'd before the
UNIVERSITY
OF
OXFORD,

On Sunday, June 29th, 1729.

Wherein the late Schemes and Principles
of *Infidelity* as Advanced, by the *Authors*
of the *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian*
Religion, The *Scheme of literal Pro-*
phesy, &c. And particularly by Mr.
Woolston, in his *Discourses on the Mira-*
cles of our Saviour, are briefly Examined
and Refuted.

By WILLIAM JAMES, M. A.
Vicar of Clyrow in the County of Radnor.

OXFORD:

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TO
The Right Reverend
FATHER in GOD,
RICHARD,
LORD BISHOP
OF
St. DAVID'S.

My LORD,

THE unexpected Approbation
this *Discourse* (however Incor-
rect) met with, when I lately
deliver'd it from the *Pulpit*, and
the earnest *Importunity* of *Friends* to make
it more Publick, have at last prevail'd
with me to venture on a *Compliance*. But
as I am not *Insensible* how Imperfect it
may appear to a Critical and Judicious
Eye, and how *Unequal* I may be to an
Attempt

The DEDICATION.

Attempt of so extensive a Design, (being especially confin'd to the narrow Compats of a single *Sermon*) yet knowing my Labours in the *Gospel* (whose *Purity and Preservation* we are in these our Days laid under the sad *Necessity* of *contending most Earnestly for*) could no ways be better Employ'd than in such *Enquiries* as these, on the very *Fundamentals* of our *Christian Calling*: I therefore humbly Presume on my *Pardon*, if I at Present shew my self in a *Cause*, which either in *itself*, might need no farther *Defence* than an impartial *Examination* of it, or if it should, it must require a much abler *Advocate* for its *Support and Maintenance*.

But should Your Lordship favour the Composition (tho' of that I make no *Merit*) as I cannot doubt but You will my *Intention* in it being Calculated (how meanly soever Perform'd) as a brief *Solution* of the *Scepticism*, and boasted Objections which some modern *Infidels* have Advanc'd against *Christianity*: I perswade my self, Your Lordship will excuse my Confidence, if I beg Your *Protection* to it, now I offer it as the *First-Fruits* of my Endeavours in the *Ministry* to the World.

And

The DEDICATION.

And as Your *Lordship* has laid me under the greatest *Obligations* to acknowledge upon all Occasions, Your undeserv'd *Kindnesses* to me, and to make known my *Gratitude* to You for them; so, my *Lord*, the *Subject-Matter* here treated of, seems more immediately to require a *Dedication* of it to so *Worthy a Prelate*, who has so *Seasonably* Interpos'd in Vindication of the *Christian Religion*, and indefatigably Labours to Rescue the *Truth* of it from the open Violence and *Misconstructions of unreasonable Men*.

They, it seems, foresaw how *Impotent* and *Abortive* their Attacks would prove against our *Faith*, unless they first *set themselves* against the most strenuous *Assertors*, as well as *Defame* and *Vilify* the shining Ornaments of the *Church*: And since this was their *Method*, they could not fail to meet Your *Lordship* in that Number, and well concluded, how *Ineffectually* they struck at the *Foundations* of our *Religion*, unless the Wound could be given through Your *Name*, and the *distinguish'd Characters* of other learned *Bishops*.

However, on this rests our *Consolation*, that our *Saviour* foretold, lest we might be *mov'd*, when it should *happen*, that the *Ministry* should be *falsely Reproach'd*, and the
most

The DEDICATION.

most faithful *Stewards* of his *Gospel* be *spoken Evil* of, only for *Righteousness* Sake. But these *late Surprises*, I am Satisfy'd, are too *weakly* Advanc'd to serve their *Turn*, and introduce the dangerous *Contrivances* of *Libertinism* and *Irreligion* amongst the thinking Part of *Mankind*, (for the more our *Scriptures* are *Tried* their *Truth* still appears the more *Firm* and *Rational*) but so far indeed have they been *Advantageous* to our *Expectations*, that they not only *Alarm* us to our *Guard*, and keep us *Awake* on a more attentive *Search* and *Knowledge of the Hope that is in us*, but have done the *Church* also that *Additional Service*, as to Engage *Your Lordship* in the *Defence* and *Justification* of it; And therefore 'twas, *Your Lordship* could no sooner form a *Design of Undertaking*, but the *whole Nation* grew *Impatient* and earnestly wait the *Publication* of so *Great* and *Commendable* a *Work*, which they can't *indeed* but promise themselves must fully answer *Your Design*, and their *Desire* of it, when they either look back on *Your former Writings*, and consider how *Eminently* and *Successfully* You have already *Appear'd* in the *Behalf* of our *Christian Mysteries*, and how *Able* You are at the same time, in *Your great Learning*

The DEDICATION.

ing and *Judgment*, as well as all other Personal Qualifications, which are Necessary to *Accomplish* and *bring it to Perfection*. But because it is Needless, so I fear, I may seem Tedious, if I dwell longer, either on them which are so well *known*, or recount those other Virtues whereof You are *Possess'd*, and which become and adorn the *High-Office Providence* hath entrusted You with. So I can only Request, (being not *Perhaps* more Oblig'd to *Your Lordship* for Your *private* Favours, than as a *Clergyman*, for the *Publick Good* You have done Religion in *General*, by *holding* and *maintaining* always the *Mysteries of our Faith in a pure Conscience*) Your *Goodness* may permit me to take this *Opportunity* of Subscribing *myself* with all *Gratitude* and *Sincerity*,

My LORD,

Your LORDSHIP's,

Most Dutiful and Oblig'd

Humble Servant,

Jes. Coll. Oxon.

Aug. 20. 1729.

WILLIAM JAMES.

THE DEDICATION

ing and... as well as all other
... which are
... to the
... that because
... I shall
... if I shall
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Gratitude and

MY LORD,

Yours Obedient

Most Dutiful and Obedient

Humble Servant

WILLIAM JAMES

2d Coll. Oxon.
Aug. 20. 1750.

A
SERMON

Preach'd before the
University of Oxford.

Acts VIII. 30.

*And Philip ran thither to him,
and heard him read the Pro-
phet Iſaias, and ſaid, Un-
derſandeſt thou what thou
reaदेſt?*

THE Expediency of a promiſcuous
Peruſal of the Scriptures, by all
Chriſtians, is very rationally de-
monſtrated againſt the Romaniſts,
as well from the Benefits and Uſefulneſs, as
the frequent Injunctions we have receiv'd
from their Authors (a) to read them; though,

(a) Deut. 6. 9. 11. 20. Job. 5. 39. Acts 17. 11.
2 Tim. 3. 15.

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by an ill use and mismanagement of the Liberty, many indeed have perversly misapplied them to their own Destruction, and the Overthrow of the Faith; howbeit as it is unjust to argue from the Abuse of a good Opportunity to an entire Removal and Abolition of it, as they contend; so nothing perhaps has administer'd greater occasions to Heresies and Disputings among us; than an heedless and injudicious study of them. 'Tis true, while we affirm the Perspicuity of their Principles and Precepts of Godliness, we can intend no more, than that all things to be believ'd and done as necessary to Salvation are openly reveal'd to us in them; because what is not plainly Reveal'd cannot be Necessary, otherwise we make God Tyrannical in requiring a Faith in us, of what he has left us wholly Ignorant of; yet it must be on the other side own'd, that there are many things *contain'd in them hard to be understood*: but methinks when we enquire into the true Notion of our Faith, and the indisputable Certainty of a divine Revelation, the Difficulties we may meet with in our Christian Perswasion may not be so much imputed to their Obscurity, and the mysterious Intimations we have given us of things Spiritually to be discern'd, as to the weakness of our Understandings and the misguidance of our own Affections; for in the one we may know indeed so much, as that at best we know things here but partially, and by the influence of the other we are often seduced

ced to form our Judgments, even of them, wrong.

But were our Minds so well inform'd and regulated by certain Precautions requisite in us to make due Reflections on the Mysteries of Christianity, we shall be convinc'd, not only on how false and ignorant a Footing some modern Scepticks have advanc'd their blasphemous, as well as sophistical Tenets, but be able also to preserve the Doctrines of our Church in the same Purity as they were receiv'd by the Apostles, and deliver'd unto us.

In order to this therefore, and for the clearer and more particular understanding what we read in the Prophetical Scriptures (a Work perhaps more than ordinarily necessary) I shall

First, Lay down some Rules which may best guide us unto the true Sense and Exposition of them, in their most abstruse and controverted Points, and from thence,

Secondly, I shall by certain Conclusions, necessarily flowing from them, endeavour to obviate the most material Objections, that have of late been made, against the Doctrines and Faith of our Church, in the Evidence and Christian Application of ancient Prophecies.

And *First*, 'Tis a Maxim by all admitted, who have apply'd themselves to Sciences and

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the Discoveries of Truth, that every Propo-
sition, tender'd to our Consideration, ought to
be weigh'd with Seriousness and Impartiality;
for from an unskillfulness and an insincere
Enquiry after the Nature of Things, as well
as from an Ignorance of them, there can result
only an imperfect Resolution, and from a
blinded Prejudice springs only an obstinacy
in Errors: but with what Attention and just
Preparation of Mind should we venture to
employ our Thoughts on religious Subjects;
and how divested of all Passion and Carnal-
mindedness should we contemplate the My-
steries of Godliness; here, I am perswaded,
may be needless to insist on, especially since
it has been so fully represented to us in a
late (b) Pastoral Letter with as much Plain-
ness as Depth of Argument? and shall only
add, that when they are taken into hand, it
should be surely with an Humility and Re-
verence due to the unerring Word of God,
and becoming such as believe them so; lest
Self-conceit may over-rule our Reason, and
thro' Arrogance and an over-fond Curiosity
we be tempted to falsify the Truth of it, and
be found Liars unto God.

Therefore I shall take a more uncommon
Step here, and offer at some Measures or ge-
neral Hypotheses, which may lead us to the
truest Knowledge of the propheticall Scrip-
tures, and whereby we may give the most

(b) Bp Gibson's Pastoral Letter publish'd last Year.

adequate Account of the proper Use and Design of them.

And as the Scriptures are generally held to be the perfect and entire Rule, by which our Judgments are to be guided in Matters of Faith, so must it be granted, that to judge of them aright, and make a just Tryal of their Doctrines, we must heed lest we mistake their Meaning.

Now for the better Interpretation of them, we must remark the various Methods of Acceptation in which their Terms are to be consider'd by us; for the Meaning of any Author or Sentence must be either collected from the obvious and natural Signification of the words, in which they are express'd; and where the words carry to our Thoughts a necessary and immediate Idea of the thing itself signify'd by them, according to their common Use, we are there bound to keep to the Letter of them, and so expound the Passage in its proper or literal Sense: Or if on the other hand the Matter of the Terms be so circumstantiated, as by a just Accommodation they may be fairly constru'd of something else, and be equally understood in a more remote Design, there also our Notions of them may be fairly extended and apprehend them, in an allegorical or mystical Meaning; for the Scripture is according to (c) St. *John*, a Book written within and without, whose Predictions may have several degrees of Com-

(c) *Revel. 5. 1.*

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plement, as it were, by a Progression of different intervening Accidents, which may be folded up in them, and therefore their several Constructions may be at once both rational and coherent. Whence arises this Observation, That many Parts of Scripture may imply more Senses than one under the same Terms, and may be as well metaphorically as naturally receiv'd.

And by the help of this Distinction 'tis easy to account for all the Metaphors, Parables, Prophecies, or typical Representations that may occur to us, either in the Old or New Testament, in full Answer to a Deistical Cavil which would overturn our whole Revelation, from the seeming Impropriety of some Passages in the Letter of them: For in Metaphors we are ever suppos'd rationally to deduce the Sense of the Terms, as well as the thing itself intended by them; in Parables the moral Sense, as well as the Historical, is pointed at; in Prophecies also the Prediction as well as the History, and under Types the thing figur'd, as well as the Figure, is manifestly delineated to us; in this manner the ancient Jews and later Rabbins explaining the Law rightly, waited for the Completion of their Prophecies, (d) which they perceiv'd
were

(d) And this is clearly intimated to us in that ingenious Observation of a learned Prelate, who in his *Use and Intent of Prophecy*, notes how the Prophets were Ministers of a double Covenant to the People of *Israel*, who generally intermix'd the promises of temporal Blessings

were only umbratical of future good things: and the Application our Saviour and his Apostles made of them to his Person, for the Proof of his Messiahship, is hereby most solidly Vindicated.

However, this double Interpretation of Holy Writ, is not always to be observ'd, or impos'd on all places of it; but on such only as may most plainly and simply bear a mediate or immediate Relation, by the universality of its Terms, to the interpreted Sense, or is such as other parallel Passages elsewhere may affirm, or be justly analogous to; for that Sense must be judg'd the most agreeable, which may best suit, not only with the Scope of the particular Passage, but the whole Tenour likewise of the Sacred Writings: But to fix arbitrary Meanings on Texts, that neither in their proper or figurative Construction or Circumstances can be so adapted, as to be Symbolical of the thing so falsely infer'd, is only to multiply our own dogmatical Impositions of Sense, whose unnatural Applications 'tis reasonable to reject, and keep to the necessary and singular design of

Blessings, with those of a spiritual Futurity and Happiness; and as they themselves had actually experienc'd the frequent Completions of the one, so by that means they were strongly encourag'd to hope for the Accomplishment of the other; When, as he argues, "in Truth the temporal Deliverances being the actual Performance of one Covenant, were a great Security for the Performance of the other; and it was unnatural to see the Hand of God performing one Promise, and not to reflect on the Certainty of his performing the other. Discourse V.

the

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the Words, *Left desiring to be Teachers of the
Law, we may understand neither what we say,
nor whereof we affirm.*

Besides, if the obvious and grammatical
Meaning of any Expression be equally with
the other rational, and consistent with the
whole Tenour of its Context, it then must
be granted most pertinent, and therefore in
Preference be specially adher'd to without
doing it Violence by a secondary Construc-
tion; tho' indeed in some Cases, that may
be yet induc'd, provided it exactly comports
with the Drift and Intention of the Prophet,
by a Propriety of Application. By this
means likewise we shall avoid a too great
Neglect of the literal Sense of the Scriptures;
a Fault I wish it were not chargable on some
Ancients of the Church, who out of a mis-
taken Zeal, have sometimes allegoriz'd away
the proper Letter, to obtrude their own
wrong Conceptions into the Oracles of God:
for by giving ourselves up to forc'd and ar-
bitrary Constructions, we let go the Certainty
of a literal Sense (which if obvious, must
no doubt be the primary and original Intent
of the Holy Ghost, and the Sacred Writers)
to indulge our own Fancies in their whim-
sical Inventions, to which Reason is able to
set no Bounds.—We grant indeed, that
where the Terms of the Revelation may be
by a necessary and natural Acceptation of
them prov'd Predictive of any future Circum-
stance, and such as may without any forced
or far-fetch'd Signification be complex, and
import

import a double Sense, we have there the sure Characteristick of a direct and positive Prophecy; for then by the Sign, as it were, is the Thing signified to be inferr'd, as being the necessary Design of the Type.—But if the Terms, in which the Matter is related, be incapable of any other Signification than what they literally imply, and can't be with Reason brought over to signify any remote Event or distant Action, besides what they simply contain, we must in that case adhere to the Letter, and conclude the whole in its immediate Implication.—This again will secure us against all the Encroachments of Enthusiasm, and the Delusions of seducing Spirits. For hereby we are instructed, not to follow the Uncertainty of Shadows, and build upon our own Conjectures, but to hold fast the Substance, and most rational Construction of the Matters we enquire into, in order to preserve our Religion consistent, and of a piece.

Again, *Secondly*, Another Difficulty, that confounds some unstable Readers, arises from the dark and obscure Manner, in which the Mysteries of our Religion are treated of. For they appear commonly so ænigmatical and perplex'd in themselves, and the manner of the delivery of them so intricate, that few Capacities arrive at a just Apprehension of them, or are able to determine their proper and true Meaning.—But for the removal of this, let it be observ'd, that where an Expression is not of itself evidently clear, (be-

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cause

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cause indeed the signification of all indeterminate Ideas, and much more mysterious Revelations are so uncertain) or cannot in its own Terms be demonstrably True and Necessary, there we are allow'd to have recourse to the Context, to which it is join'd, for its Explication, and so from the occasion of it, and by comparing Scripture by Scripture, infer its proper Meaning. For 'tis not possible the Mouth of the Almighty can teach us in one place one thing, and declare the contrary in another ; (for so, his Word would be imperfect and of no weight,) and consequently the Truth of the Revelation can't be better understood, than by taking in the whole Chain and Circumstances of the Argument, and thence by the Connection of the Whole, we form our Judgment of its proper Sense.

Moreover, when two different Meanings are offer'd on the same place of Scripture, and we are left to our own Judgments for Satisfaction in them ; that Meaning is allow'd to be most acceptable, which is most natural or agreeable to the common Acceptation of the Words ; or should this be doubted, their truest Sense may be collected yet from the general Interpretation of the primitive Church. For as the just Sense of the Scriptures, was undoubtedly look'd upon as of the greatest concernment to all Christians, so they had in the first Ages as large Capacities, and greater Opportunities of Understanding them rightly, than we can well at this distance of time pretend to.

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The Truth of them therefore is not to be taken from our Fancies and humorous Criticisms, but is founded on themselves, and recommended to us by the general consent of the Christian Church; recommended, I say, for altho' the concurrent Explications of Fathers and Decrees of Councils, may be taken as very proper Helps to assist and direct us in the true Knowledge of the Objects of our Faith, yet their Opinions ought not to be receiv'd as the very Grounds and only Doctrines of Christianity, but so far forth are they to be regarded, as they are Consonant and Analogous to the Letter of the Scriptures.

But farther yet; We may misapprehend the genuine Import of a Text, either from the Sublimity of the Subject-matter it contains, or the Ambiguity of the Phrases in which it may be deliver'd.—*First*, From the Sublimity of the Subject Matter; because 'tis plain such Objects may be propounded to our Consideration, which we can have no perfect or determinate Knowledge of; and 'tis equally plain, where we have no full Comprehension of the Thing itself, or our Capacities are inadequate to it, 'tis Presumption to be peremptory in determining its Nature, for we know it not. Hence it follows, that if the Objects on which we employ our Thoughts be Infinite, and our Intellectual Faculties Finite, and consequently disproportionable to them; in

such a case our Reason is not the proper Test of their Truth, but the Authority of the Writings that assure us of it. — 'Tis true, if by the Connection of such Ideas in a Proposition there should necessarily result a Disagreement or Repugnancy of Sense, or what is opposite to the evident Intuitions of our own Minds, 'tis natural then to disbelieve it as a Contradiction in itself. But, if in the Connection of the Terms there appears no Inconsistency, but only that they exceed the natural Conceptions we have of things; and if there be no Standard, that we know of, in Nature existing, to which we may compare them, or the complex Idea cannot be adjusted by any likeness or resemblance of it in the visible Course of Nature, or in the Perceptions of our own Minds, (the only means we have of knowing things of ourselves) yet it follows not, that the thing is Impossible, but Inconceivable only by us. "For if it be requir'd, that the Divine Power "is limited to do those things only which we "can adequately conceive, and the Divine "Veracity to reveal only such as we can "comprehend, then God would not be more "Powerful or more Wise than Man is, which "is too gross a Supposition". We conclude therefore, that a finite Understanding, which can't well account for the least Atom in Nature, is as unable to comprehend all that God does, or may reveal to it, as a finite Power is to effect every thing he can. Wherefore all Mysteries of divine Revelation are

are highly credible and demand our assent, because they depend not on our Skill and Knowledge of them, but on themselves, for their own Evidence and Truth.

But, *Secondly*, We may again misapprehend the true Import of a Text, from the Ambiguity of the Phrases in which it may be deliver'd. However 'tis highly absurd to pronounce Sentence on the Credit or Truth of any History, if we are unacquainted with the Peculiarities and Manners of Writing that obtain'd among the Authors. We must be well inform'd in the Nature of the Thing, before we are qualify'd for competent Judges of it, and be farther satisfied that our Conceptions are full and adequate to it, or otherwise *the Truth cannot be in Us*. It would perhaps be better for the Sceptick not to know at all, than to *know but in part*; and surely the least a thinking Man can do, is to suspend his Judgment for a while, and humbly submit his Reason to better Instructions; as he would choose a Guide amidst the Shades of Twilight, lest he stumbled, and could see nothing before him *but thro' a Glass darkly*.

Besides, another cause of an injudicious Interpretation of the Scriptures may be gather'd from the little Acquaintance we have with the Original Languages; from some particular Idioms in which they were Wrote; and their frequent Allusions to ancient Rites, which are now either forgotten, or very rarely understood.

These

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These indeed serv'd a late Writer (e) for a sufficient *Discouragement of Us from the Study of them*, and in others they have rather rais'd Ridicule than quicken'd their Industry to understand them. But 'tis certainly ungenerous to slight and vilify a History, only because they are indiligent to Examine the Drift and Tendency of it; and to set all at nought, because they know little of it, or consider it not. And I can't forbear remarking, how this Tenet leads us to another as Absurd, which some others (f) have run into, who conclude from the several Misinterpretations Men make of the Scriptures against the Reception of them at all. But if they urge this, I need only reply, that the same Argument will hold good against all current Coin in the Nation, because there may be some Counterfeit, and none it seems should be therefore receiv'd among us; or that there should be no Law to adjust our Rights and Properties by, because Lawyers are apt to disagree in their Explanations of it.

But let us hasten to a more virulent Scheme of modern Scepticism, and enquire, as propos'd, in the 2d Place, whether from the few Observations before hinted at, we may not only be able to return satisfactory Answers to it, but establish our own Faith on a sure and immovable Footing.

(e) *The Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Study of the Scriptures, &c.*

(f) *A Discourse of Free-Thinking, &c.*

And

And the first that occur are (g) *those* who would confine the Sense of all Prophecies to the bare and naked Letter of them, and condemn all figurative Explications; but what Absurdities must they fall into? Either they must maintain the grossest Improprieties, or wholly defeat the Intention of Prophetick Writings. For if by a literal Sense they understand no more than the immediate Signification of Words, 'tis evident many material Prophecies (which even they allow of) are render'd most flat and unaccountable Contradictions. For the Terms in which they are express'd, are in the strictness of Grammar, utterly inconsistent with themselves, and therefore capable of no immediate Construction. But if by a literal Sense they will suppose the natural and necessary Significations of a Discourse, and the things properly intended by the Words, they can't but with us consider those Prophecies (*as they are Prophecies*) in a secondary View, and judge them to have an intentional Tendency to some remote Event; and then I conceive they may be justly interpreted in their mystical and spiritual Import, and the Truth of their Predictions, by the congruity of the Accomplishment, be known; for *when that which is Perfect is come, then that which was in Part shall be done away*. For Confirmation of this we need only reflect, how familiar a Figurative and Poetick Style was to the Authors of

(g) *The Scheme of literal Prophecy consider'd.*

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the Old Testament, and how their Sayings
were generally heighten'd with Rhetorical
Expressions, or much darken'd with Umbrages
and allegorical Coverings; and in our last
Conclusion we are secure, for thus have they
been expounded in all Ages by the Jews, and
on which they founded all their Hopes.
Hence Prophecy is well Styl'd a *Light*, tho'
it shineth but at a distance, and *in a dark
Place*, and we are encourag'd to *give heed
to it till the Day dawn, and Things be made
manifest unto us*; as a Mirror, tho' in itself ob-
scure, is yet able to cast the just Reflections
of outward Objects, and brings nearer our
Sight, clear and strong Representations of
Bodies, which the naked Eye cannot discover;
and in both Cases, I believe we may conclude,
that those Bodies are not the less Real, be-
cause for the present we can only have ob-
scure Perceptions of them, thro' their Shades
and Images.

However again, we contend not to be
hereby at Liberty to refer all former Prophe-
cies to what Events soever we may fancy, (for
then our Inventions of Comments would be
as different, as our Ways of Thinking are
various.) but in the Applications of them,
the whole Drift, Incidences, and Circum-
stances, are to be well Weigh'd, and
when upon the Comparison of them, with
the thing prefigur'd, there results an exact
Harmony of the whole symbolical Interpre-
tation with the Letter, tho' an intermediate
and historical Sense may be concomitant and
admitted

admitted of, yet the Spiritual or Allegorical at the same Time may be rightly fix'd and (b) apply'd: Of Consequence by this Rule, as a Key, we may be able to discover, how absurdly many Prophecies have been misinterpreted; and either thro' an ill-designed Corruption, or an Ignorance of them, are often misapply'd; for no false Teacher can arise, but by this premis'd Test and Scrutiny he may be detected; and this is the Boast of our Faith, that the great Author of it hath in all things fulfill'd the Law and the Prophets, which testify'd of the Messiah, for in him alone was that Character fully answer'd.

Now if either they were not suppos'd predictive of the Messiah, How came the Jews to understand and receive them in such a Sense, so long before our Saviour's Appearance on Earth? Or if they afterwards wholly deny'd the force of such Allegations as were produc'd out of them; Why did Jesus and his Apostles argue with them upon such un-

(b) Thus St. *Matthew* in his first Chap. Ver. 15, applies a Prophecy out of *Hosea* in a Spiritual Sense to our Saviour Christ, which was literally meant, and as Commentators generally agree, understood of the Prophet himself, and the People of *Israel*; and a few Verses following, he cites another Prophecy out of *Jeremiah* 31. 15. which tho' primarily relating to the Calamities that befall the *Bethlemites* in the Prophet's own days, by the hands of the *Babylonians*, yet he mystically interprets it of the Massacre the Children of *Bethlem* suffer'd in *Herod's* Reign; and in this View we are to consider many other Citations in the Gospel, and out of the Old Testament, on whose History the Evangelists grounded their Prophetical Interpretations.

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certain Principles, as tho' they were Con-
cessions of their own? For unless they were
all Agreed to refer themselves unto the Pro-
phets for Satisfaction in their Doubts, the
one as vainly requir'd, as the other urg'd the
Accomplishment of them in his Person.

But by the way, This Writer has been so
injurious to his own Scheme, that he seems
to have furnish'd us with no weak Argument
against himself; for grant with him, that the
Prophecies of the Old Testament are all to
be literally receiv'd, it will follow, that in
whomsoever they are literally accomplish'd,
to him alone they are justly applicable; and
therefore 'tis, that we are able so readily to
Demonstrate Jesus to be the Christ. For the
Jews have not yet so much as pretended the
Completion of many of them, neither are
they supposed to have any other intermediate
View, but the Christ, in the delivery of
them; and as we shew they never could
possibly be before, or after the Person of
Jesus, but in Him alone compleated; 'twas
He consequently that was to come, and we
can't reasonably look for another. It is ob-
vious then, our Arguments of this sort are
only the more strengthen'd by these Cavils,
as has been of late (i) learnedly Defended a-
gainst him, in a critical Discussion of his, and
the Misconstructions of *Grotius*.

(i) *The Reasoning of Christ and his Apostles Vindicated,*
by Mr. Bullock.

Others,

Others, (k) *Secondly*, Deny the Force of Miracles, and their Evidences to ground the Reasons of the Christian Religion only, on the correspondent Agreement of the Anti-type in the New, with the Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament: However, were it not foreign to my Purpose, I might demonstrate the Conclusiveness of the Argument we draw from Miracles, for the Truth of Christianity against them; and prove how necessary Circumstances they are to strengthen and expedite the Belief of it. But let it suffice to remark, That the Application of the most express Prophecies is, of it self, no direct or positive Proof, but they are Characters only of the Christ: 'Tis true, if they were not Applicable to Jesus, He could not be the promis'd Messiah; for the want of any one of them would disprove it, and over-rule all the Appearances of Miracles: But these were chiefly brought, as well to shew that He was the Person foretold in the Prophets, as to remove all Objections the Jews might raise against Him on that score; whilst the Works which He did were the only positive Proofs and Assertions of it; and of consequence these did only illustrate what the others directly evinc'd and confirm'd. Tho' the Concurrence of both Proofs was, at the same time, necessary to establish their Faith in Him, and the one cou'd not be sufficient and satisfactory without the other: For, as there could be no

(k) *The Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, &c.*

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greater Marks of a divine Character afforded them, than those visible Effects of the divine Power attending it in the Performance of Miracles: So the Messiah could not rightly be distinguish'd and known, but by the Demonstration He gave of Himself in his Works, which necessarily asserted the Authority of the divine Testimony, and the proper Application of Prophecies to Him.

Moreover, 'tis observable, the Reasonings of Christ and his Apostles, for the Establishment of the Faith, were various, and generally suited to the several Dispositions of those, with whom they convers'd: If with Jews, they always shew'd the exact Completion of all their Predictions, and Hopes of a Messiah in the Person of Jesus: But, with the Gentiles, who disallow'd both the *Law* and the *Prophets*, they as constantly appeal'd to Miracles for their Conviction. The *Author* therefore very Illogically inferrs, If, because Christ and his Apostles often Reason'd from the Old Testament, that therefore they us'd no other Arguments to Convert the World by; or, because some times they used Allegories, and illustrated Facts by the Analogy of others parallel to them: Therefore their whole Discourses were merely Allegorical, and to be Figuratively interpreted. ---No doubt the ancient Prophecies were so express and circumstantial, that a Christian justly refers himself to them in Vindication of his Faith; But does it follow, that there were no other Means left, or made use of, to evince the Truth

Truth of it? For if, as he grants, Doctrines consistent with Truth, Godliness and Reason, may be confirm'd by Miracles, we contend for no more: That the Gospel contains such Doctrines we insist on, and none have yet disprov'd; we appeal therefore to the Latter, as the most valid Attestations, which he admits, of them: For we hold Miracles, not as bare Manifestations of themselves only, but as the proper Vouchers, and the direct Justification of the Authority of those that work them. This Observation then, not only may assist us to obviate the groundless Scruples, which Some have labour'd to perplex the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation with, but gives us also a short View of the Foundations on which 'tis built: For as it is originally founded on the exact Agreement it bears with all preceding Manifestations of God's Will to Mankind, which have been, since the World began; so is it sufficiently confirm'd to us by those mighty Signs and Wonders, which attended the Publication of it, and have been always held the truest Evidences of the divine Approbation: However, it seems, lest this last Argument might be too cogent and conclusive for the Truth of the Christian Faith, and have its due Influence on our Minds, this Opposition made against it has been,

Thirdly, More blasphemously supported by a later Writer; (1) who would laugh away

(1) Woolston's *Discourses on the Miracles*, &c.

the Reality of Christ's Miracles into mere Shadows, and denies the scriptural History and Credibility of them, in defiance of the strongest Evidences that Matters of Fact are capable of: However, if he will abide by Reason, he must grant all Matters of Fact to be in themselves historically True, and if True, they must therefore be literally receiv'd and understood, tho' in the Intention of them, they may be sometimes Accommodated according to our first Rule, to a farther and spiritual Interpretation; wherefore, if our Saviour is said to have perform'd any publick Action, we may be doubtlesly justify'd to interpret that Action literally, and credit the Testimony given of it by proper Witnesses. For either it must have been Transacted in the Sight of those Witnesses that relate it, or the Evangelical History of it is False; if he denies the First, he must shew it to be either impossible, but all Things are possible with God, or they deceiv'd, who give and affirm the Testimony, or that they design'd to deceive us by *declaring unto us only those Things which they had heard and seen*; but this I think he has been so ingenuous as not, or unable to Attempt; and if he Challenges the the Latter he is reduc'd to this, either to destroy all Credit in General, and make all, which we have no immediate self-evident Knowledge ourselves of, to be a Cheat, or the Senses of other Men not to be depended upon in any Case; but this again he will not affirm, the Gospel therefore must stand as
sure

sure as any other whatsoever, because it has in it Equal, and all the Marks of Credibility.

Again, if the Allegorical must destroy the literal Sense of a Thing, the same Thing must be suppos'd to mean something and nothing at the same time; for from what is Absurd in it self, there can flow thence only Absurdities: Or, which is an equal Contradiction, it must be *true*, and *false* at the same Time. Farther, he sometimes Admits our *Saviour* to be a *true Prophet* in his own Sense, but in ours a gross *Impostor*; and on this he grounds his Notion, because the *Things which he did were not Miracles*. Strange Reasoning, that the same *Person* should be at once a *true* and a *false Prophet*! That what he perform'd, should as *he himself owns*, be Typical of some of the Fundamentals of our Religion, yet *ridiculous*, or nothing at all! The Consequence then is but too *Natural*, that his whole *Religion* is so. But if Christ had the Power of exhibiting the *Types of Good Things to come*, must not the same *Power* have enabled him to Confirm his *Divine Mission*, by the proper Signs and Tokens of it? If he *allows* him the one, the *others* are *Necessary*. For Miracles have been ever suppos'd the most *decisive* Evidences of a *Divine Mission*. 'Tis true, in his Parables, we must regard our Saviour's Intention, and not the bare Similitudes alone: for these were only to Illustrate what was intimated by the other, and their *Moral* was easily to be Apprehended by every Hearer: but by his Works he could *intend nothing*, if by the Performance

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formance of them, the People were not to be convinc'd, that he was sent from God, to bring Salvation unto Men. And why did he not inform them, that they were only to be receiv'd *Mystically*, when he referr'd them to the *Miraculousness* of them, for their Conviction? But this pretended *Spiritualist* surreptitiously takes off the *Letter*, that he may the more readily pervert the Sense of it, and he (as Gregory Nazianzen (m) complains of some Hereticks in his days) commits *Scripture-Sacrilege*, that he may the more easily disannul the Gospel of Christ. For this is only to bring him down to a Level with the *Author*, who, in the custom of Madmen, thinks *All are even as himself*; 'tis no other than an Attempt to conceal in *Darkness*, and under the *Mystical Veil of Symbols*, to Eclipse the *Glory* of that *Day-Spring from on high*, which thro' the tender Mercy of God, hath visited us.

But once more, examine him and see his Impious Absurdities, in the single Instance of Christ's Resurrection (which indeed is the sure *Anchor* of all our Hopes in him) he there confidently denies the *Matter of Fact*, how clearly soever Attested, and affirms a *Spiritual Resurrection* only to be imply'd in it. But according to his own Account (not to insist on the particular *Circumstances* of the Story, under which it is Morally Impossible to sup-

(m) Orat. 36. Οἱ τῶν γεραμάτων ἱερόσυλοι, καὶ ἰδὼν τῶν γεραμμένων κλέπτοντες τοὺς πολλοὺς σφιστερίζονται, καὶ τὸ ὁδὸν τῆς ἀληθείας παρεγώουσι.

pose it a *Falshood*) I would willingly know how there could be any Spiritual Resurrection, at least suppos'd, if there were no *Circumstance Typical*, or *Emblem Significant* of it? Either therefore he must grant that there was some *Turn* in Christ's Life *Symbolical* of it, or his own *Inference* falls of course. For the very supposal of an Action to be *Mystically* or *Spiritually understood*, must at the same Time necessarily infer the *Reality* and *Letter* of it. But it seems he had rather than conceal, either his *Insincerity* or his *Ignorance*, draw his Argument for it, from mere *Nothing*; an *Absurdity* as *Chimerical* as his other *Positions*, and must *Ultimately* end in the utter *Subversion* of Christianity. Therefore if he admits Jesus to be the Christ, (as he often does) he can't but admit also all the *Predictions* relating to the *Messiah* to be *Accomplish'd* in Him: but how were they *Accomplish'd*, if he in no *Circumstance* verify'd them?

Thus, had I time, I might run thro' all his Arguments, and shew you their *several Contradictions*, which he has falsely laid to our Charge; and be able to state, on the contrary, the undoubted *Reality* of Christ's other *Miracles*, from those very *Particulars*, which he has *presumptuously taken upon him* to cavil at. However I shall at present content myself only to make this other Observation, how grossly he has *misapply'd the Fathers*, and abused their Arguments, in Favour of his *Infidelity*. The *Authors*, he has quoted, are but few; and 'tis remarkable, he has extorted Meanings out of them, in direct Oppo-

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fition to what *they Used and Designed them for*. This has been his *Treatment* of St. Hilary, Origen, St. Austin, (n) Erasmus, &c. Tho' it must be allow'd, that They, together with St. Cyrill and St. Gregory, apply'd themselves much, and perhaps more than was needful, to this Method of *interpreting Scriptures*: but yet where do they wholly reject the *Letter* of it? If they did receive the one, did they not allow of the other also? And are not others, St. Jerom, Chrysostom and Theodoret, as laborious to Establish the *Letter*, as they were delighted with the *Figure*? Moreover, any common Reader may discern, how they used and intended the *Allegory*, not as the *natural Signification*, but only as a Means to stir up and engage the *Thoughts* of their *Hearers* more Attentively, on the *Letter* of it; And it was rather, as we gather from St. Chrysostom and St. Gregory, a *Moral Commentary* on, than any *True* and *Mystical Meaning* of, the History.

Besides, I may safely add this as a Reason likewise, that as the *Jewish Rabbins* had generally used this Method, in the Interpretations of the *Law*, and not *Unjustly*, that being only a simple Representation or Portrai-

(n) Whose *several Passages* I might here particularly enumerate, was I not well Satisfied from my own *Collations* of them, that we need only look into their *Originals* to be Convinc'd, how ungenerous and dishonest his *Representations* of them are: But as a full *Citation* of them, I fear, might be either *Foreign*, or would at least swell a *Discourse* of this Kind, to too large a Bulk; So the *Expectations* we at present entertain of having this *Task* very soon and justly Perform'd by a *Learned* and *Judicious Prelate* of our Church, must render it in this Place needless.

ture of the Gospel, that was to *succeed* and fulfill it, so the Custom prevail'd even with some of the *Fathers*, in the first Ages to follow *this Method of the Cabbalists*; tho' by the way, they never doubted once of the *Facts* and *Letter* of the *Scriptures*, however they Expounded them, as *Daille* (o) has very learnedly Proved. Hence *Photius* (p) accuses *Philo*, for introducing so much Excess of it, into his own *Writings*, and *Origen* and some Others, for Transferring it from him into the Church, and continuing it for some Time afterwards; 'till *Origen* was again *Reprehended* by St. *Jerom* (q), who often declares, he blush'd (r) at his own Attempts of this Kind. St. *Austin* too Acknowledges in his *Confessions*, as well the Danger, as Usefulness, of it in Controversies against Jews and Hereticks. For He says of Allegorical Interpretations, *Non esse hunc sensum contentiosis & infidelibus sensibus ingerendum*: and St. *Jerom* on the 13th of St. *Matthew* affirms, *Pius quidem sensus, sed nunquam parabola & dubia ænigmatum intelligentia*

(o) In his *Treatise concerning the right Use of the Fathers*.

(p) Cod. 105. Ἐξ οὗ οἶμας καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀλληγορεῖας καὶ γενοῖς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ λόγῳ ἔχον ἐισπῆναι. viz. (ut in margine notatur). per *Origenem* & *Cyrillum Alexandrinum*, ut inter Latinos B. *Ambrosius* pleraque a *Philone* mutuatus est.

(q) Venenata sunt illius dogmata, aliena a Scripturis Sanctis, vim Scripturis facientia. *Hierony. Epist. 65. Pamachio & Oceano de erroribus Origenis. Ita in Comment. in Hieremiam*, allegoricus & delirus interpret vocatur.

(r) Fateor, miratus sum quod quantumvis aliquis male scripserit, invenit lectorem similem sui: ille prædicabat, ego erubescbam; ille quasi mysticos intellectus ferebat ad cælum, ego demisso capite, confiteri pudorem meum prohibebar.

poteſt

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potest ad auctoritatem proficere: And therefore all the *Controversial Writers* and *Apologists*, such as, *Justin Martyr*, *Irenaeus*, *Tertullian* and many others, besides those already mention'd, always adhered to the *Literal Explication* of *Scripture*, ever sparing of forced Construction, where the Terms were in themselves consistent and needed none; and therefore *Turretin* (s) reports it to be a standing Rule among the *School-men*, that the *Symbols* and *Allegories* they drew from the Sacred Writings for their *Explication*, were never to be admitted as Proofs, but *Probabilities* only. Can he then profanely mention these as *Authorities* to justify his *Explosion* of *Christ's Miracles*? and audaciously *Scoff* at our Religion even under the specious *Names* of the *Defenders* of it? If he believes what they Wrote to be true, must he not believe the *Apostles* whose *Disciples* they were, and upon whose *Foundation* they were built? And if them, why does he account them *Liars*? If their *Interpretations* be to be depended upon, doubtless the *Gospel* itself must be certain: and if certain, it follows that the *Matters* therein contain'd are so, and were *literally Real and Authentick*. But if he defames the *Gospel*, well may he calumniate the *Ministers* of it, and we shall not think it hard to suffer, if the *God*, in whom we trust, is evil spoken of. But think, Thou, O Lord, upon the *Tribe* of thy *Inheritance*, and *Mount Sion* wherein thou hast dwelt: Let the *Adversary* no longer do this dishonour to thy Testimonies, neither let him *BlaspHEME* thy Name for ever!

(s) Institutio Theolog. Elémentæ. Lib. 1mo. Pag. 168.
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